
**Higher Education & Workforce
Education Committee**

SSB 6171

Brief Description: Creating a demonstration project to help prepare bilingual and special education teachers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Schmidt, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a demonstration project to help classified public K-12 school employees earn a teaching certificate with an endorsement in bilingual or special education.
- Provides classified employees who are seeking endorsement in special or bilingual education with conditional scholarships through the future teachers' conditional scholarship program and loan repayment program, or through one of the alternative routes to teacher certification.

Hearing Date: 2/17/06

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

Shortage of Special Education and Bilingual Teachers

Accordingly to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), vacancies for special education teachers are the highest for any endorsement area in Washington. Likewise, the number of pending retirements indicates that special education will continue to be a major shortage area.

Bilingual educators are also in demand, although the shortage is not as severe as in special education, and tends to vary based between geographic areas of the state. In eight out of the state's nine educational service districts (ESDs), there is some shortage or a considerable shortage in bilingual educators. Only in ESD 101 (Spokane) is the number of bilingual educators balanced with the number of positions for bilingual educators. According to the OSPI, five ESDs have a "considerable shortage" of bilingual educators. These ESDs are: 112 (southwest Washington), 113 (Grays Harbor and Thurston counties and surrounding areas), 114 (northwest Washington), 123 (southeast Washington), and 189 (northwest Washington).

Classified School Employees

Classified school employees are school personnel who do not hold a professional education certificate issued by the OSPI, or who are employed by a school district in a position that does not require such a certificate. It is believed that classified employees, who have already expressed a commitment and interest in working for the public schools, are good candidates for certification in bilingual and special education.

Three alternative routes exist to earn teacher certification, two of which are specific to classified school employees. Prospective teacher candidates using one of these alternative routes can earn certification in a shorter time than through a traditional program.

In 2000 and 2001, the Legislature provided \$1 million to fund a conditional scholarship demonstration project for classified employees to become teachers. This program has not been funded since 2001.

Conditional Teacher's Scholarship Program

The Legislature has funded a statutory conditional teachers' scholarship program. In 2005-07, the Legislature provided \$500,000 for the program. This program is open to anyone seeking a teaching certificate, although priority has generally been given to participants seeking certification or an endorsement in math, science, technology, special education, bilingual education, or participants willing to work in a shortage area.

Summary of Bill:

A demonstration project is created that helps classified public K-12 school employees earn a teaching certificate with an endorsement in bilingual or special education. This project will provide conditional scholarships through the future teachers' conditional scholarship program and loan repayment program, or through one of the alternative routes to teacher certification.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) will submit findings by January 2008, to the Legislature and the Governor about the impact of this demonstration project on entrants into the teaching profession in the shortage areas of bilingual education and special education.

The alternative route conditional scholarship program and the future teachers' conditional scholarship program are amended to allow the funds provided for the demonstration project to be distributed within the applicable rules, as determined appropriate by the HECB in consultation with the Professional Educators Standards Board.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.